17 November 1975

THE NATION

Scenario of the Shake-Up

Gerald Ford's Sunday shake-up had its roots in the very beginning of his Administration and was a belated attempt to deal with several high-level personality and policy clashes.

Even as Ford prepared to take over the Administration from Nixon in August 1974, some members of his informal "kitchen cabinet"—which included former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, former Presidential Aide Bryce Harlow, former Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton, Michigan Senator Robert Griffin, and then NATO Ambassador Donald Rumsfeld—had some advice.

TERRY ARTHUR

DISMISSED DEFENSE CHIEF JAMES SCHLESINGER
"I haven't resigned, sir."

They urged that Ford relieve Henry Kissinger of his job as head of the National Security Council to devote full time to his duties as Secretary of State. No matter how able, they argued, he could not do justice to both, and his dual role tended to "rupture the process" of policy-making. Ford, emphasizing the need for "continuity" in foreign relations, rejected their advice.

Also, when he was still Vice President, he expressed his personal misgivings about working with Defense Secretary James Schlesinger. He told the *New Republic's* John Osborne in April 1974 that if he became President, he might not keep the caustic Schlesinger in his Cabinet because he did not think the Secretary could deal with Congress. Ford, as well, felt uncomfortable with Schlesinger. But, apparently for the sake of continuity, he made no change.

As Ford's Administration progressed, Kissinger's two-hat burden and Schlesinger's abrasiveness became more troublesome to the President, and in a way, the two problems began to merge. Last March, when Kissinger's Middle East shuttle collapsed just as South Viet Nam and Cambodia began to fall, the Secretary lashed out at Congress for not responding with more arms and money for Southeast Asia. Ford's advisers again warned that Kissinger was overworked and overwrought. But rather than rein in Kissinger, Ford joined him in an unproductive attack on Congress.

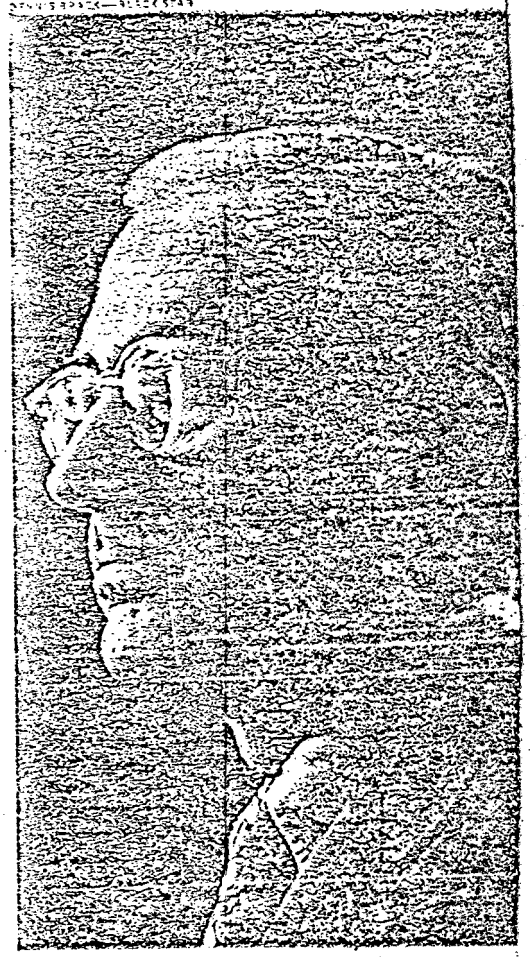
At the same time, relations between Kissinger and Schlesinger, two strong-willed, independent men, grew tenser. They had been squabbling since the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, when Kissinger charged that Schlesinger tried to stall the massive resupply of U.S. weapons to the Israelis. A year later, Kissinger promised to consider sending Pershing missiles to Israel; Schlesinger, who had not been consulted when Kissinger made the promise, contended that reopening production lines for the missile was impractical. More seriously, they increasingly disagreed on détente, notably on just what concessions could safely be made to the Russians to gain an agreement on limiting offensive nuclear weapons *(see box page 20)*.

Each suspected the other of using guerrilla tactics. Schlesinger aides complained that their boss would present persuasive views at National Security Council meetings chaired by Kissinger or send reasoned position papers to the White House, but because all national security proposals flowed through Kissinger, arguments were emasculated by the time they reached Ford. Kissinger assistants, in turn, claimed that Schlesinger would seem to concur in policy sessions, then disclose contrary views to reporters. At one NSC meeting attended by Schlesinger and some of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kissinger threw a copy of *Aviation Week* on the table and, shouting, demanded to know who had leaked a story headlined SOVIET TREATY VIOLATIONS DETECTED. Schlesinger, a strong advocate of tighter measures to prevent cheating on weapons agreements, claimed not to know.

Sometimes Schlesinger did not speak out publicly but, according to some Ford advisers, conveyed his message through his two main supporters in the Senate, Washington Democrat Henry Jackson and New York Republican James Buckley. Says a Buckley aide: "Kissinger's office was keeping the book on Schlesinger. There was a minor industry in the State Department of putting the blocks to him." The sus-

singer told Nelson Rockefeller he was convinced that Schlesinger was out to get his job as Secretary of State. Kissinger and Schlesinger began finding reasons to skip their once-a-week scheduled breakfasts. The last was held on Sept. 12.

The impression of a divided Government became embarrassing to Ford. And he faced other problems within his Administration. Both Kissinger and Rockefeller were complaining about the way CIA Director William Colby was candidly answering questions by con-



OUTGOING CIA CHIEF COLBY
"Good luck, Jim."

gressional committees about the CIA's assassination plots against Cuba's Fidel Castro, its failure to destroy potential biological weapons and its illegal snooping on the mail of domestic political extremists. Publicly, Ford claimed that Colby was carrying out his directions, as befits an "open" Administration; privately, Ford was irritated.

Above all, the politics of trying to discourage a challenge from Ronald Reagan grew urgently important to Ford. Finally, he moved to tackle all of those problems in a burst of decisive action. His maneuvering unfolded on the following eventful days:

Oct. 16. Ford's unofficial group of advisers, who had been meeting periodically with him and a few senior White House aides for more than a year, held another of their straight-talking, "you've